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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 002564

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DEPT FOR AF/SE AND AF/SPG

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TAGS: PREL PGOV MOPS UG SU

SUBJECT: GOSS VICE PRESIDENT TELLS SPECIAL ENVOY THAT "DISTRUST" PERVADES LRA PEACE TALKS

REF: KHARTOUM 2527

Classified By: P/E Officer Michael Honigstein, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. GOSS-mediated peace talks between the Ugandan government and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army were difficult and protracted even before the latest upsurge in LRA-related violence, GOSS Vice President Riek Machar told visiting Presidential Special Envoy Andrew Natsios October 17. Their discussion came a day before LRA forces attacked several civilian vehicles on major roads east and south of Juba, killing approximately 17 people (reftel). Machar sought U.S. support for the talks. Machar, like many of his colleagues in the GOSS, also asserted that Khartoum continues to supply non-governmental militia in the south. End Summary.

LRA Talks

¶2. Talks have been underway since July 15, Machar recounted, but there is still a pronounced lack of trust between the two parties. LRA negotiators question the GOU's motives at every turn, and force protracted debate on even trivial matters like the use of the word "combatant." The GOU "stigmatizes" and "castigates" the LRA, Machar said, and some members of the GOU negotiating team believe the LRA can only be dealt with through military means.

¶3. "Museveni has been telling me that since 2001," Natsios replied. "Every time I would see him he would say the war would be over in six months." Asked how the U.S. might assist, Machar said "convince Museveni that there is no military solution." Machar also pressed for U.S. financial support for the peace talks, which he said were very expensive for the cash-strapped GOSS. Natsios made no commitments.

¶4. The parties had made reasonable progress toward a protocol on a comprehensive approach to the social and political roots of the LRA insurgency, Machar said. He and his team were devoting at least eight hours a day to the peace talks. It was possible that a protocol could be signed "this week" setting the stage for additional agreements on LRA assembly, disarmament and reintegration, along with processes for justice, reconciliation and accountability. The parties had agreed in principle on the concept of "alternative justice," incorporating traditional reconciliation mechanisms from northern Uganda, Machar said. But there remained the vexing problem of "how to handle the International Criminal Court (ICC)." Four of the LRA's top commanders, including its leader Joseph Kony, are under ICC indictment.

¶ 15. Natsios' meeting with Machar followed a spate of LRA-related incidents in southern Sudan, including a clash with cattle herders north of Juba, a clash between the LRA and the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) east of Juba, and an incident in which the LRA killed a UPDF captain south of Juba. The day after Natsios and Machar met, the LRA carried out two attacks on civilian vehicles on roads south and east of Juba, killing approximately 17 people (reftel). Both LRA and GOU delegations suspended participation in the talks until the situation could be clarified.

Machar: Khartoum Backs Southern Militia

¶ 16. Natsios asked Machar about continuing reports that the government in Khartoum is supplying militia in the south. These reports are true, Machar asserted unequivocally. The SPLM had reconciled with most southern militia and associated political factions formerly backed by Khartoum, Machar said. The difficult process of integrating former Khartoum-backed militia into the SPLA and other security forces was underway.

Nevertheless, Machar claimed, Director of Sudan Military Services and Intelligence Salah Gosh and others are supplying potential dissidents to prevent the consolidation of GOSS control over southern Sudan. While at the moment these militia are "not fighting," Machar said, they pose a significant security threat. Machar also asserted that the Khartoum-backed Popular Defense Forces sometimes cross the north-south border.

Sanctions, the CPA and Oil

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¶ 17. "We miss American companies here," Machar said, referring to U.S. sanctions on Sudan. Natsios replied that the U.S. has just rescinded most sanctions affecting southern Sudan, and that more U.S. companies will now be free to do business in the south pursuant to the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act of 2006 and the implementing Executive Order signed 13 October. However, Natsios noted, significant sanctions remained in place for the petroleum sector. Machar said that while the GOSS understands the rationale for sanctions, it worries that southerners will be most affected. The fledgling GOSS operates almost exclusively on oil revenue and donor funds, Machar noted. Delays in demarcating the north-south border, implementing the decisions of the Abyei Border Commission, and "operationalizing the National Petroleum Commission" were very worrisome. Each of these factors, Machar said, affects the viability of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Natsios said the United States is aware of these concerns and is prepared to back a meeting of the IGAD guarantors of the CPA to review the status of implementation of the agreement. Machar said he would welcome such a meeting, and asserted that the lack of an "enforcement mechanism" is a major weakness in the agreement.

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